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CHURCH UNION

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(New Series)

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Church Union

News and Views

(New Series)

The Local Effects of Union

THE immediate effect of Church Union will not be to change all our familiar ways of worship and of Church administration. The Plan states: "no customary forms shall be changed or new forms introduced into the worship of any congregation without the agreement of the Presbyter in charge and the Pastorate Committee". About administration it adds: "the existing forms of local organization may continue to function for this period [an undefined period for adjustment and development] provided they do not conflict with the Constitution of the Church...." Such statements are a clear answer to the fear that Union might mean immediate, far-reaching changes in every local congregation.

At the same time, it is not to be imagined that Union can or ought to leave local Church life unaffected. The heart of the meaning of Union is that fellow-Christians in the same area, who up till now have been organised separately, will become openly one family, doing things together. This is bound to have big results. We shall learn from each other in matters of worship. We shall share responsibilities in matters of organisation. Unless this happens, Union will be a meaningless act.

One sphere in which this will apply is in the formation of Dioceses. No congregation will remain isolated from its neighbours. In each area of reasonable size there will be a diocesan organisation in which the pastors and representatives of all local churches will take part and in which there will be a Bishop exercising his distinctive office. Here we shall work together with our neighbours, and for some of us the change involved will be considerable. The questions that are still to be answered, however are: "What will that reasonable area be?", "Who will our neighbours be in that area?" and "How shall we provide for the work which must be done?"

The study of these questions was first taken up in a central committee, and emphasis was laid on the need of sufficient size for each area to command resources to ensure efficiency of work. It was also clear that if the bishop is to be fully set apart for his episcopal work, he must be adequately provided for. These things are important, but the fact has to be faced that in some quarters there is a real nervousness lest this should mean saddling the local churches with a new burden. Such a fear can destroy all enthusiasm for union.

In this situation the Negotiating Committee took a new step which might very well turn what has been a problem into a source of fresh vision and enthusiasm. The people who can best answer the questions for each area are the people in that area, and the Negotiating Committee has asked them to confer together to prepare definite plans.

Obviously this is not to be a plan to carry a burden, but a plan for dynamic Church life. The Church is a living organism in which each contributes to the purpose of the whole. No one thinks of his legs as a burden to be carried or of his arms as an unnecessary load. The designer of a vehicle does not put in mere weight but builds in each necessary part to share in making the vehicle more efficient. A similar purpose is expressed in Church organisation.

Besides this, the churches already provide for administration not only locally but in Councils and Unions for each area. If the administration is united in a diocesan system, where all play their part, and if it is served by one who is a real Pastor to pastors, why should it not be more efficient and proportionately less costly than before?

Local conferences to deal with these practical problems may well prove fruitful for the whole implementation of a living Plan of Union. In them for the first time many will realise that Union is close at hand and will learn to know each other not in debating differences but in working out the practical decisions needed for the Church's life. In such conferences many will soberly realise the practical advantages of union in the mundane, but important matter of economy and efficiency. Above all, such conferences may well prove to be the place where the imagination will be kindled to the sheer thrill of what Union will mean when we are no longer shut off from one another, but each enters into the full heritage of all.

This work is waiting to be done in the year 1956. It calls for action in every area of the uniting Churches. If the call of the Negotiating Committee is acted upon it ought to be possible at the end of the year to set out a Plan for diocesan boundaries which is at once practical and inspiring.

How the Plan of Church Union Looks From W. Pakistan.

Rt. Rev. Lawrence Woolmer

MANY leaders in the Churches of West Pakistan are strongly in favour of Church Union between the Presbyterians, Methodist and Anglican Churches, but the present *Plan of Church Union* in N. India and Pakistan has not as yet been widely studied. One reason for this is that the largest non-Roman Church in West Pakistan, having about 140,000 members, is the United Presbyterian Church which, as yet, has shown little interest in the subject of church union. It has taken the stand that as the majority of Protestant Christians in West Pakistan is Presbyterian, therefore, if church union is to be sought it should be on a Presbyterian basis. Some of the United Presbyterian friends favour a federal union on the lines of the suggestions made by the Rev. Stanley Jones, whilst others think that the present happy co-operation of the non-Roman Churches in the West Pakistan Christian Council makes church union unnecessary. One consequence of this negative attitude towards church union has been that any joint study of the Plan of Church Union by the Churches in West Pakistan has had to be done outside the usual framework of Christian Council activity, and it is only in the last two years that representatives from the U. C. N. I., the C. I. P. B. C. and the M. C. S. A. have really come together for detailed study of the Plan. It was good that at the recent Church Union Conference held in Lahore, a few days ago, attended by delegates from the above-mentioned Churches, an observer from the United Presbyterian Church was present.

Autonomy for the Church in Pakistan

A major concern of the negotiating Churches in West Pakistan is that the United Church in West Pakistan should have autonomy and not be under the authority and direction of a Synod whose members will be largely drawn from India and have little experience of life in Pakistan. The very fact that at the last two meetings of the Negotiating Committee in Allahabad in 1953 and 1955, only one member was present as a delegate from West Pakistan suggests that there is little consciousness within the Churches in India of the peculiar problems which face the Church in Pakistan. At a Church Union Conference held at Lahore in December, 1954, it was agreed that while the Churches in Pakistan should unite simultaneously with their brethren in India under the one Plan of Church Union, the United Church, in so far as it will be within West Pakistan, should become autonomous immediately after union. In particular :—

(a) It should have its separate Synod and Moderator.

(b) Its finances should be separate.

(c) It should have the power to negotiate further union with Churches in West Pakistan (in agreement with the whole United Church where matters of faith and order are concerned).

The Negotiating Committee gave favourable consideration to this request, but decided that the best method of meeting it was by making provision for Regional Synods, if demand

should be made for such an arrangement by at least three dioceses, and establishing also a General Synod which would be the supreme supervisory and legislative body of the Church. It was also decided to instruct the Continuation Committee to recommend the necessary steps for the provision of a Synod of North India and a Synod of West Pakistan, under a General Synod.

The recent Church Union Conference in Lahore welcomed this response from the Negotiating Committee but decided to indicate certain points which would need to be considered in order to make the proposal for a General Synod and Regional Synods fully acceptable to the Churches in West Pakistan.

1. It should be recognised that the Synod of West Pakistan would be fully autonomous, except in matters of faith and order, provided that speedy action be advisable in the sphere of order, the West Pakistan Synod would have the right to adapt and elaborate its Constitution to meet the needs of its local situation, it being understood that there would be no departure from the basic framework of the Constitution.

2. Complete financial autonomy should be granted to the Synod of West Pakistan, though some small equitable contribution would be expected for the support of the General Synod. It was hoped, however, that no expensive machinery would be needed for the running of the General Synod which was expected to meet only once in five years.

3. The Bishops for the Dioceses in West Pakistan should be chosen by a central body composed of representatives from the uniting Churches in West Pakistan. (See Page 45 of the Plan of Union).

4. The Synod of West Pakistan should have authority to enter into negotiations with other Churches in West Pakistan.

5. It was felt that, in the case of West Pakistan, to think in terms of a Regional Synod under a General Synod would be unwise, seeing that the Synod of West Pakistan would be fully autonomous except in matters of faith and order. Moreover, it should be understood that the Synod of West Pakistan would expect to have direct relationships with the World Council of Churches and, to a certain extent, with other Churches outside Pakistan.

6. It was decided to consult the Negotiating Churches in East Pakistan in regard to the question of autonomy, and their relationships with a United Church in West Pakistan.

More Dioceses

Considerable attention was given by the Church Union Conference to the question of the number of dioceses in the United Church in West Pakistan. It had been noted that only two dioceses had been recommended by the Sub-Committee on Dioceses and Episcopal Support, which had met in Bombay in March 1955. The Conference arrived at a unanimous opinion that four dioceses should be contemplated for West Pakistan, centering on Karachi, Multan, Lahore and Sialkot respectively. Their lay-out and membership would be roughly as follows :—

1. Karachi, Sind and Baluchistan 10,000
2. Multan Division and Bahawalpur 40,000
3. Lahore District together with the North West Frontier and the Rawalpindi-Murree area 65,000
4. Sialkot and remaining parts of Lahore and Rawalpindi Divisions 40,000

If the United Presbyterian and American Reformed Presbyterian Churches should join in the union, then probably two further dioceses would be required, one of these centred on Peshawar, the other perhaps on Lyallpur.

The Allahabad Amendments, 1955

The Lahore Conference noted with appreciation the amendments to the Plan of Church Union accepted at the Allahabad meeting last August. In particular, it was grateful for the amendment in the section on the Doctrines of the Church whereby the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are accepted as the inspired Word of God, as containing all things necessary to salvation, and as the ultimate standard of faith. It was felt that the addition of the words "as the inspired Word of God" would be of help in gaining interest from the United Presbyterian Church. Another useful amendment in this way was the rewording of the fourth sentence in Section XIV (1) on page 17, to read, "There should be no place in North India and Pakistan where members of the Church of North India and Pakistan would not be under the jurisdiction of some

Bishop of that Church". The former wording that there should be no place in North India and Pakistan that is not under the Jurisdiction of some Bishop of the Church had seemed to disregard the principle of the Comity of Missions, which has been carefully observed in West Pakistan over the past years, even by those Missions which have entered the country recently but have not joined the West Pakistan Christian Council because of its association with the World Council of Churches.

Other amendments to the Plan of Union which had required careful attention at Allahabad last year were not much discussed at the Conference in Lahore. The reason was, I think, not only lack of time but that at the present stage, many of the Church Union delegates in West Pakistan are more concerned for the autonomy of the coming United Church in Pakistan than for the finer theological points of the Plan of Union itself. The average pastor in West Pakistan is not very theologically-minded and has for instance, not yet given much attention to the wording of the declarations and formulas set out in the chapter dealing with the Initial Unification of the Ministry. If the large measure of autonomy requested for West Pakistan is granted, then the Plan of Union is likely to receive increasing consideration in the next two or three years, not only on the high-powered Conference level but also, we trust, on the parochial level.

The Methodist Contribution to the United Church.

Rev. C. C. Pande

THE Methodist Church of the British and New South Wales Conferences in North India is the smallest Church now negotiating to enter into an organic union. Our work in North India began in the latter half of the last century amongst the British residents in this part of India and the work amongst nationals started some years later. The total membership of the above churches is 8,000, with 36 ministers, (including supernumeraries and probationers). The income from overseas for the support of the Christian Ministry and Church work is a little over Rs. 105,000/- I would like to suggest what contribution this small church can make in a union in which the four other negotiating Churches have a total membership of 12,00,000.

1. The necessity for a living church.

As in the past we have sought to fulfil the mission of the Churches in Britain and New South Wales, so now we expect that through the formation of the United Church, we shall find new hope of fulfilling the mission of the Church in N. India. Thus we bring a desire to extend the mission of the living Church.

2. Emphasis on the place of the laity in the spiritual life of the Church.

The Methodist Church has laid a great emphasis on the spiritual responsibility of the laity. The leadership of the Church is shared both by the ministry and the laity; for the pastoral work of the Church cannot be adequately carried on only by a full time ministry.

The Methodist Church has the system of class leaders, who should be real pastors of small groups of people. These class leaders have the spiritual responsibility for the members of their groups and they form the strongest link between the minister and members of the Church.

The system of Local Preachers has developed in our Church because of our belief in the spiritual responsibility of the laity and it is to be hoped that in moving into the larger fellowship of the united Church this contribution will be made. Local Preachers are lay men and women who are approved by the Church and they have the responsibility and privilege of conducting worship and preaching in any society throughout the whole of Methodism.

Lay men and women have an important share in the training for Christian discipleship.

Also in our system we look to the laity to take the financial and administrative responsibility.

3. The Ministry of Our Church

We look forward to Union in the confidence that it will provide an opportunity for

those ordained in the Methodist Church to fulfil more completely the promise made at the Ordination Service :—" As you are called to be ambassadors on behalf of Christ, beseeching men to be reconciled to God, as though God were entreating by you, will you continually stir up the gift of God that is in you, by the help of the Holy Spirit, to testify the Gospel of the Grace of God to all men ? "

We feel too, that the Sacraments will have a richer and fuller meaning within the united Church.

4. The Evangelical doctrines of the Methodist Church.

(*a*) *Salvation by Faith.*

All can receive salvation through an act of trust. We can neither earn it nor discover it for ourselves. Our justification, our salvation, our righteousness is all by Faith. Anyone, whatever his position, his need or degree of sinfulness, if he trusts in Christ alone, can be set free from sin ; its guilt and its power. Our preaching declares that the grace of Jesus Christ can bring salvation to every-one who will trust in simple faith.

(*b*) *Assurance.*

Further, one who is saved from sin need not remain in doubt of his salvation, always *hoping*, but never *knowing*. We can by faith and by the gift of God's Spirit whom we receive, *know* here and now that we are justified ; that we are children of God. Our own spirit rejoices in this confidence and in the certainty that by faith we are " acceptable to the Beloved."

(*c*) *Holiness or " Perfect Love " or " Entire Sanctification ".*

God's greatest yearning for His children is that they may be perfect as He is. He wills that we be filled completely with Divine Love. Because He desires this He makes it possible for us to be fully sanctified by our dwelling in Christ and His indwelling in us.

This is our opportunity and privilege and our obligation—to permit the love of God to flood our lives and make us holy ; as perfect as he can make us, in this world as in the next. The work as well as the joy of Heaven begins here in this world.

These distinctive doctrines are our joyful heritage and source of evangelistic zeal.

5. Prayer Meetings

We lay great stress on the importance of Prayer Meetings. We believe that prayer can move the hearts of man. In every society we try to have regular prayer meetings. These purposeful prayer meetings are the great instruments by which we can show God's love to man.

6. Class Meetings

No Church can be really strong unless the members receive regular spiritual nourishment. We believe that this can be done through the Class Meeting. Our class meetings for different groups and for people or varying tastes and ages are carried on by class leaders. At these meetings members have fellowship through Bible study and through sharing their problems in prayer and every member can be brought into intimate relationship with his own minister through the class leaders.

There are meetings for class leaders with the minister who helps them to find spiritual refreshment and encouragement.

Class leaders as well as ministers prepare new members for membership in the Church.

Class leaders also have responsibility for collecting contributions from members towards the financial support of the Church and this gives them an opportunity of training their members in regular giving.

In conclusion, though we are only a small body, we feel there is a specific contribution we can make to the United Church and we are eagerly anticipating the inauguration of a Union which will provide a richer, deeper fellowship for all and also make it possible for evangelistic work to be carried on more effectively than ever before.

Scheme of Church Union in Ceylon

Rev. J. W. L. Timmins.

I

THE impulse and inspiration behind all the negotiations for Church Union in Ceylon has been the older Scheme for Church Union in South India. As is well known, negotiations started in India in 1919 and continued more or less uninterruptedly for the next 28 years until Reunion was achieved in 1947. The Anglican and Methodist Churches were two of the negotiators in South India and these are the largest non-Roman Churches in Ceylon. The South India United Church, the third of the negotiators in South India, had congregations numbering about 3000 persons in the North of Ceylon. Thus the fact and the trend of the negotiations in India had immediate effect in Ceylon, in so far as the churches here, whose fellow worshippers were seeking Union in Inia, were influenced to consider whether they should not negotiate Church Union also. Since other churches were working in Ceylon who were not parties to the negotiations in India, it was considered desirable to initiate separate negotiations so that the Presbyterian and Baptist Churches should be able to share as full participants. The subsequent negotiations were conducted by these five churches.*

The way towards actual negotiations was paved by the formation of a society called "The Friends of Reunion", the outcome of an inter-Church conference held at Trinity College, Kandy in 1934. Prayer about and study of the whole problem of Reunion, together with information of what was happening in South India, gradually brought about an atmosphere in which matters could start moving in Ceylon. The initiative was taken by the Provincial Synod of the Methodist Church in Ceylon in 1940, which invited the other churches to explore the feasibility of opening actual negotiations. The invitation was accepted and the preliminary discussions enabled a report to be issued recommending that a Negotiating Committee be set up.

It became plain at this early stage that some churches felt that it would be impossible to accept the already nearly completed South India Scheme without considerable modification; and the subsequent negotiations have shown that, although the general pattern of that Scheme has been followed in the matters discussed and even in the final lay-out of the Scheme, the substance of the agreements recorded differ very considerably.

Owing to the pressure of work on all concerned during the years of the war and domestic concerns of certain churches, it was 1945 before the Negotiating Committee actually started its work. A document was issued in 1947 on the Faith and Order of the United Church and the first full edition of a Scheme was sent to the Churches in 1949. From this point the negotiations were more truly between churches, for until then the delegates had worked with very little more than general directives from their Churches that certain matters must be raised and embodied in any Scheme.

This first full Scheme was sent to each negotiating church with a request that official amendments should be proposed and comments made about the whole course of negotiations. Each Church at this stage took the opportunity of obtaining full comment from its parent body in England or elsewhere and three years passed before the material was ready to be considered afresh by the Committee. This second stage was completed in 1953, and a second edition was issued in that year.

The Negotiating Committee had hoped that with the consideration of the parent bodies, the negotiations would have been completed, but the Anglican Church at least wanted to reconsidered the amended Scheme and make further suggestions for amendment. These, together with some amendments from other churches came before the Negotiating Committee early in 1955, and in the middle of that year a second revised scheme was issued. The Committee issued a statement to the Churches that it was their belief that their work was finished, but that the Committee would be reconvened to consider any fresh amendment, but only with the consent of all

*The writer is indebted to the Introduction to the "Scheme of Church Union in Ceylon" for much of the facts which appear in the following paragraphs.

the Negotiating Churches. It is too early yet to know if any such move will be made by any Church, but the initiative now lies with each Church as a whole, and not with the Negotiating Committee.

II

Assuming that the Scheme has reached its final form (and it is very unlikely that any suggestion for radical amendment would now be considered by the churches) it remains to describe how the Churches will take steps to decide for or against Union on the basis of this Scheme.

Three kinds of decision are possible to each Church :

(i) an unqualified decision to enter union on the basis set forth ;

(ii) a rejection of the Scheme ;

(iii) an acceptance of the Scheme together with proposed amendments, provided that acceptance is not conditional on these amendments. In the third case, the amendments must be considered by the Inaugural Committee, a Committee which will be set up to carry out the actual implementation of the Union.

Each Church must come to its decision in its own proper constitutional way :

In the C. S. I. Diocese of Jaffna, the Synod of the whole Church has already given permission for the Diocese to enter a United Church of Lanka. The main text of the Scheme has been approved, but the latest amendments still have to come before it. Once that is done, the Diocese of Jaffna is ready to enter into union.

The Baptist Church in Ceylon is an autonomous body which has power to make its own decision. Before doing so it would, however, seek the advice of the Baptist Missionary Council in England and the Baptist World Alliance and, without being constitutionally bound by this advice would give it the very greatest weight in coming to its own decision. It will be necessary for each individual Baptist Church in Ceylon to give its separate decision on the Scheme, and then a vote of the Baptist Council in Ceylon will give its verdict in the name of the whole Baptist Church.

The Presbyterian Church which has been negotiating, is now known as the Presbytery of Lanka. This does not include a congregation of the Church of Scotland in Colombo, nor the Dutch Reformed Church; both are outside the present negotiations. The Presbytery of Lanka is autonomous and while it may seek advice from the World Presbyterian Alliance and any other body, it is free to make its own decision.

For the Methodist Church in Ceylon the final decision does not lie with the local church. The Scheme will first be laid before the Quarterly meetings of the Circuits and then, if favourable decisions are recorded, it will come before the annual Synod of the Methodist Church in Ceylon. The final vote will be taken by the British Conference of the Methodist Church.

The Anglican Church of Ceylon will have to reach its decisions in exactly the same way as happened in the case of the South India Scheme. The dioceses of Colombo and Karunagala of the Church of India, Pakistan, Burma and Ceylon must receive the Scheme and forward it to the General Council of the Province. After being passed the first time by the General Council, the Scheme is remitted to every Diocese of the Province. If two-thirds of the Dioceses approve in their Diocesan Councils, and twenty one months have elapsed since the first approval, the General Council may vote its second and final approval. At some stage there must be consultation with the Lambeth Conference or the Lambeth Consultative Committee, who must give their opinion on the final draft of the Scheme. It is the intention of the Church of Ceylon to receive the opinion of the 1958 Lambeth Conference on the already completed draft before setting in motion the constitutional procedure outlined above.

This account has so far been confined to outlining the ecclesiastical procedure necessary to create a United Church of Lanka. But there are also important legal measures to be taken. Each Church has properties and trusts and in some cases the legal title to these depends on Ordinances of the State. Indeed in the case of the Church of Ceylon its whole legal existence and constitution depend on legislation. It will therefore be necessary to seek an amending Ordinance to terminate the existing status of the churches and to incorporate a new United Church. Only so can the present constitutional and legal status of the churches be terminated and

a new order be legally created. This will not be easy to achieve but it must be set about, once the decisions of the churches are known, if indeed these decisions are in favour of the Union.

There will therefore be no immediate decisions to be made known. Reunion will be a slow but steady process. Each Church is at present engaged in making known the actual proposed Basis of Union to its members. Steps are being taken for translation of the document into Sinhalese and Tamil. Meetings are being arranged to publicise the Scheme in the Churches. We have entered upon a period which will last over two years of waiting upon the guidance of God to give us a right decision in this vital matter.

(We hope later to publish a second informative article about the nature of the Scheme of Church Union in Ceylon.—Ed.)

Book Review

"Royal Priesthood"

(Royal Priesthood: by Prof. T. F. Torrance; Scottish Journal of Theology Occasional Papers No. 3; Oliver and Boyd, 9/-)

This scholarly and stimulating book is offered as a contribution to the discussions at present going on between the Church of Scotland and the Church of England with a view to better understanding between them, and, in the words of the author's dedication, "in the earnest prayer that they may soon be one". It contains much that is entirely relevant to the discussions in the area of North India and Pakistan.

Prof. Torrance shows clearly the centrality of the People of God in the unfolding of His purpose. Israel was a priestly people and the same is true of the new Israel. But priesthood in the Old Testament is not to be divorced from God's Word and so in the Church the ministry of Word and Sacrament belong together. "It is the ministry of Word that continues to beget and maintain the Church" but also "it is as the Word becomes event in the sacramental ordinances that the Church as Body takes shape and form under the ordering of the Word of the ascended Head". This explains why the ordained ministry is ordained "to celebrate the Eucharist within the corporate priesthood of the whole Body" and why the "fullest order is that ordained to the celebration of the Eucharist". This does not in any way take away from the importance of the *Episcope* or oversight which has always been a vital function in the Church. But on this subject both episcopal and non-episcopal readers will find much food for thought in Dr. Torrance's claim that the Episcopate is essentially corporate. With such a teaching a reconciliation between Presbyterian and Episcopalian doctrines of Church Order is well within the bounds of possibility. Dr. Torrance pleads for an episcopate which is "not a higher priesthood but as a special gift for the oversight of the priesthood and as a sign both of the corporate nature of the priesthood and of the corporate continuity of the Church".

In conclusion Dr. Torrance resumes his powerful plea, already heard at the Lund Conference, for Intercommunion as the way to the mutual adaptation of the churches. His plea includes this statement:

Behind the whole issue of intercommunion lies the fundamental doctrine of Atonement through the Blood of Christ. For churches to refuse to come together at the Lord's Table is surely to deny the sacrifice of Christ, for He loved the Church and died for it to make it one in Him... To hold ourselves back from inter-communion is in point of fact to limit the range and efficacy of the death of Christ.

W. S.

Differences about Baptism

Rev. B. F. Price

IN a front-page article in a recent issue of the *Christian World* (February 23rd, 1956), the President of the British Methodist Conference is reported to have said "I should like to see a new approach made to Baptists. There is nothing in Methodism to prohibit the baptism of an adult person." No doubt Dr. Weatherhead went on to say something further about the problems of Church Union as they concern both Methodists and Baptists, and it cannot be supposed that he imagines the difficulties facing Baptists as they contemplate union with other Christians to be capable of being so lightly dismissed. There is, however, something significant in the way in which those brief remarks are so naively quoted in a widely-read editorial article, since it is all too often supposed that obstacles to union are unnecessarily magnified by those who perversely refuse to see a simple solution when it lies to hand. Even the authors of the Church of Scotland *Interim Report* on Baptism (p. 529) appear to suggest that Baptists are simply concerned with the 'adult age' of the baptized person.

Those who have studied the '*Plan of Church Union in North India and Pakistan*' will be aware that provision is made for two alternative practices with regard to baptism: baptism of infants and baptism of believers (1954 Edition, p. 3). For the majority of those who hope to participate in union, this presents no problem, since they already use both practices. That there is, however, a difficulty for Baptists who contemplate union, cannot be overlooked, and it is about this difficulty that I propose to write.

The Baptist Position

Baptists are now aware, many of them regretfully aware, that the emphasis which is laid on the word 'alternative' in the above passage by members of the other uniting Churches, involves the acceptance by them of an attitude towards infant baptism which is, to say the least, contrary to their custom. It would be quite impossible to estimate the proportion of baptisms which take place in Baptist churches in England which are 're-baptisms', since in the average Baptist church no distinction would be recorded between the baptism of an adolescent child of Baptist parents who had never previously been baptized, and the baptism of one brought up by parents of another denomination who subsequently joins a Baptist church on profession of faith and re-baptism. Many Baptist churches in Britain would, in fact, refuse membership to a person baptized in infancy unless that baptism was repeated prior to joining the Baptist church.

Some readers of this article will no doubt be repelled by this description of Baptist practice in Britain; others will consider the situation there to be irrelevant to India. But I would plead that members of the other four negotiating bodies should seek to understand the background from which those missionaries have come and are still coming, without whom there would not have been Baptist churches negotiating for union in India today. It is very difficult for some Baptists in this country to accept a Plan of Union which would refuse to their fellow-Christians in India what they consider to have been a privilege which they themselves enjoyed,—the public confession of their faith in a baptism which was, in their opinion, even if not in the eyes of others, their first valid baptism. How can they, in the future united Church, conscientiously dissuade others, baptized like themselves in infancy, from making a public witness in a baptism arising out of conscious faith? Unless a satisfactory answer can be given to this question it will be impossible to bring about Church Union in India in which Baptists can participate without the occurrence of further disruption within Baptist ranks. I cannot hope in this one short article to provide the answer to this problem, but something will have been gained if discussion is stimulated and the argument carried further in subsequent issues of this journal.

There are many Baptists who would agree that baptism is unrepeatable, but that since they do not recognize infant baptism as a baptism worthy of the name, no repetition is involved when baptism subsequently takes place on profession of faith. If pressed

further, they would say that, strictly speaking, Church members who have not been baptized as believers are really unbaptized Christians. However plausible that may sound in a situation in which the Baptist denomination exists alongside of others it is far from satisfactory when Baptists are seeking to join with other Christians in one Church in which both forms of baptism are recognized. Baptists cannot at the same time enjoy the privileges of belonging to a united Church, and the satisfaction of being able to maintain that only the form of baptism undergone by a minority of members in that Church is true baptism. Baptists must realize the full implications of the statement on p. 2 of the Plan: "Those only shall be members of the united Church who have been baptized." This leaves no room for 'unbaptized Christians'.

Freedom of Conscience!

Many Baptists who are not satisfied with the present lack of provision for a second baptism in the proposed united Church would claim that any Christian should be allowed the right of baptism in such a way that he is aware of being baptized. What validity, they ask, can there be in a baptism of which we have no conscious recollection, which we can only believe to have taken place because our parents or other adults vouch for its occurrence? Such an attitude has, in the past, led to repeated baptisms as new 'conversions' take place, and the validity of each previous 'conversion' is successively repudiated. The best safeguard against such a situation is a recognition that we have no right to claim that only one particular form of baptism is true baptism in the sight of God. It is one of the consequences of the involvement of the Christian faith in history that the truth of the Gospel is not something which depends upon our 'feeling' it to be the fitting way for God to approach man. As Christians, we are always dependent on the testimony of the Church and the Word of God in Scripture. It is not, therefore, so contrary to the nature of the Gospel as some Baptists would maintain, that baptism in the case of the majority of Christians is an event whose occurrence is vouched for, not by their own memory, but by the evidence of the Church. There is, on the one hand, the truth asserted in the Church of Scotland *Interim Report* on Baptism (p. 559) that "Apart from repentance and faith Christian Baptism is unthinkable"—a truth which is differently interpreted by Baptists and by other Christians,—and on the other hand, the truth of which Baptists should not lose sight, which is expressed in the words of the well-known hymn:

'Unnumbered comforts on my soul
Thy tender care bestowed,
Before my infant heart conceived
From Whom those comforts flowed.'

If adequate provision is not made in the united Church for the re-baptism of those who conscientiously feel that their first baptism was not valid, many Baptists would claim that freedom of conscience is not being respected, and that all Christians are being forced to conform to one ecclesiastical pattern. Baptists are rightly proud of their contribution in the struggle on behalf of religious liberty, a liberty which they claimed not only for themselves, but also for those with whom they differed. But can we claim that the situation in 20th century India, where 2% of the population are baptized Christians, is remotely like that of 17th century England, where 98% of the population were baptized Christians? Is a claim to assert one's own freedom really justified from a Christian point of view, when at the same time it involves the repudiation of the unity of baptism in the one Church? The freedom which we would demand on these terms is in effect a freedom to offend the conscience of the Church for the sake of maintaining one's own 'rights'. Let us not forget that the conscience whose liberty Paul was most concerned to safe-guard was not his own conscience, but that of his fellow-believer, so that he should give no occasion of stumbling to the Church of God (I Cor. X: 32).

All are united in agreeing that no procedure for the unification of the ministry is acceptable which involves re-ordination. Why, then, should one of the uniting Churches claim the right to re-baptize? Surely such an emphasis suggests that the outward form is more important than the faith to which it is supposed to bear witness. Baptists would be the first to repudiate any doctrine of 'baptismal regeneration' where infants are concerned, but does not an undue emphasis on the form of believers' baptism suggest that the baptism here, too, is of such primary importance that the

accompanying faith is secondary? As Baptists we assert most strongly that faith is a necessary accompaniment of Baptism, and yet we appear to hesitate about accepting as adequate a confession of faith because it is separated by a number of years from a prior baptism instead of accompanying or preceding it.

Again, Baptists will object that by depriving a believer of the privilege of baptism after conscious acceptance of the Lordship of Christ, an opportunity is lost of bearing witness to his conversion. But is the emphasis being laid in the right place in such an assertion? To what, after all, should a Christian bear witness? To his own conversion, as though his own religious experience were such an important event that it could only be effectively proclaimed by a repetition of baptism? Or should it not rather be to bear witness to the grace of God, which is an unchangeable, constant factor, valid through time and eternity, whatever one's own changing moods may be' 'By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.' It is not only Baptists who can preach on that text.

The Abiding Truths

Baptists, rightly as I believe, have generally considered that they lay great stress on the evangelical truths of Christianity. But the word 'evangelical' is interpreted in different ways by different Christians. In a recent article in the *BaptistTimes* (January 26th, 1956), Dr. J. N. Tennent stated with regard to the World Council of Churches: "There are also in fellowship groups who cannot be described as evangelical, the Lutherans, for example, whose official doctrine teaches that baptism saves children." And yet, within a month after that article appeared, a Lutheran visitor to Serampore was casting grave doubts on the ability of Lutherans to contemplate joining the future united Church in view of the participation of those who would naturally discourage the baptism of infants, thereby obscuring the true evangelical emphasis.

Is it not at least conceivable that St. Paul, if he were to be asked his opinion concerning the present problems in N. India, would answer in the same strain as he did 1900 years ago, circumcised Jew though he was: In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision, but faith working through love'? He never repudiated his infant circumcision, though he learned not to rely on it for justification, any more than he repudiated his Israelite ancestry, since without it and all that it stood for of God's covenant mercies, he would perhaps never have gone on to faith in the true Messiah. But he shows no sympathy with those who would glory in the flesh. He reminds the Corinthian Christians of their on baptism I Cor. VI: ll), but he goes on to warn them in the tenth chapter of the same letter that the baptism in the Red Sea had not availed for the salvation of the generation that perished in the wilderness, any more than had their participation in the spiritual food and drink that accompanied them. In their case, the sacraments had been a judgment on them, instead of a means of grace. And since these things were written for our admonition, would we not do well to take heed to them and apply them to our own situation? By laying undue stress, or by appearing to do so on the 'experience' of baptism, may we not sometimes overlook the necessity of going on from baptism to live out the life of faith? After all baptism is not an end in itself, but a means towards an end,—the greater glory of God, not of ourselves.

Many Baptists will no doubt accuse me of repudiating the truth which God entrusted to our forefathers at a time when wrong views of baptism had superseded the New Testament faith and practice. I should like to take this opportunity of asserting that I still believe the baptism of believers to be more in accordance with the practice of the primitive Church than the now more generally established custom of infant baptism. But I can sufficiently understand the attitude of my paedo-baptist friends to realize that what is often called a maintenance of Baptist 'rights' in the united Church would be an offence against the conscience of the Church, to which I could not lend my support. The contemplated sanctioning of re-baptism subject to certain limitations, whatever satisfaction it might give to certain individuals would not contribute in any degree to prove that the Baptist position was right, or that such baptism was more in accordance with the will of God than the initial baptism of the person concerned. It might very well have the opposite effect to that intended, and instead of leading to the deepening of the

spiritual life of the Church, might simply give occasion for the manifestation of spiritual pride.

What contribution, then, can Baptists hope to make to the united Church? Is their destiny simply to decrease that others may increase? Some fear that that will be so, that the initial advantage gained by the unrepeatable baptism of an infant will lead to the disappearnce of the Baptist witness. That such a possibility exists, cannot be denied. But it can also be argued that the minister with Baptist convictions has every right to proclaim those convictions whenever a suitable opportunity occurs. The present provisions of the Plan do not involve a conspiracy of silence on the subject of baptism. Such an attitude would merely have the effect, in the long run, of leaving nobody with any worth-while convictions about baptism. If, as we believe to be true, believers' baptism is the form of baptism practised in New Testament times, we have every right to prove its truth on scriptural grounds. But that is not the same thing as claiming the right to re-baptize. There is a word recorded of Gamaliel which is none the less a word of Scripture for having been spoken by an opponent of the Church: 'If this counsel or this work be of men, it will be overthrown: but if it is of God, ye will not be able to overthrow them.' Can those convinced of the truth of believers' baptism not have faith in the ultimate vindication of the truth as they see it, if it is also God's truth?

Letter to the Editor

BAPTIST AND NON-BAPTIST

Dear Mr. Editor,

I have read through the first number of "News and Views" and feel that it has made an excellent beginning. I was particularly interested in Mr. Wenger's article, expressing a Baptist point of view, and should like to say a little about the problem of conscience which it raises, from the point of view of one living in West Pakistan. The views are, of course, my own, and I do not claim that they are more than individual.

For the negotiating Churches in West Pakistan, who do not themselves contain any Baptists, to join in a Church Union which permits the practice of Believer's Baptism, is going to be a real adventure, and will call for adjustments and sacrifices. It will on the one hand make union with the Pakistani Lutheran Church more difficult, if the Lutherans I have spoken to are representative of their Church's point of view. This Church, whose first Bishop was consecrated last December, is as yet small in numbers, but its missionary staff is increasing rapidly. On the other hand, ultimate union with the Conservative Baptists will be more likely. The Conservative Baptist Mission began work about a year ago in the Khairpur Division, in cordial fellowship and co-operation with their Anglican and Methodist neighbours; their first two converts have been baptised, and their missionary strength in this relatively "empty" area is on the increase. Their missionary leaders are following with keen interest the negotiations for union, and only distance prevented their sending an observer to the recent conference in Lahore.

In Lahore, Rawalpindi and Multan Divisions (roughly the former Punjab), where the great mass of Christians in the Negotiating Churches live, there are no Baptist Churches so-called; but there are at least three groups which practice Believer's Baptism. These groups disregard comity relations, and do little or no missionary work in "empty areas"—the Brethren, the Pentecostalists and the Seventh Day Adventists. For many Pakistani Christians, therefore, Believer's Baptism is looked upon as a sign of sectarian spirit, of taking advantage of village quarrels to proselytise, and of making "converts" by unworthy financial inducements. The fact that no Church observing Comity here practises Believer's Baptism means, therefore, that in practice one who is convinced of its rightness and acts on his convictions is driven out of the regular Churches into these

sectarian groups—a most unsatisfactory state of affairs. To make Believer's Baptism possible for such a person without driving him out of the Church's fellowship would be a real step forward, though certainly a daring one.

The problem which must be thought through if there is to be real union, is how to do this in the case of one baptised in infancy, without chaos and misunderstanding. We must, of course, be quite sure that the person concerned has really thought the matter out and knows what his desire implies. Not very long ago I had a talk with a young member of our Church who had been in some contact with Brethren and S. D. As., and said he felt convinced that Believer's Baptism was right, and Infant Baptism was wrong, and asked advice as to what to do about it. As I discussed the matter with him it became clear that he looked on Baptism as a Sacrament, as something which God does, and therefore unrepeatable. I put before him briefly, and as objectively as I could, that there were three main views on Baptism, the view of our own Church, the Barthian, and the Baptist. I gave him a tract putting our own Church's point of view, and asked him to consider it prayerfully. At the time he seemed genuinely relieved at the Barthian point of view—that it was possible to believe that Believer's Baptism was preferable, and yet that Baptism should never be administered twice. But some time later he wrote saying that he felt our own Church's point of view was scriptural. I feel that if a Bishop of the Church after union is spiritually sensitive and fair-minded, he will genuinely try to guide such a man to face up to the problems that his desire for Believer's Baptism raises, think over fairly the doctrine of Infant Baptism, and find out what his real conscientious desire and conviction is.

If he is convinced that Believer's Baptism is necessary, will "a service of immersion in the threefold Name as an act of reaffirmation of the baptism received in infancy" be enough? I am sure it will not. Baptism, and nothing less, will satisfy his conscientious convictions. Yet to those who believe that Infant Baptism is a Sacrament, a second Baptism will seem an insult to God and His grace. What then is to be done? Surely we must come to such a problem in an attitude of humility, trusting that if this second Act *is* indeed Baptism, God will through it admit to His Church; and that if the first Act *was* indeed Baptism, God will forgive the blindness of those who are sincerely seeking to do His will, and bless in spite of it. Surely a full Baptismal Service, preceded by a simple prayer putting this attitude into words, would meet the convictions of both points of view. An attitude of "reverent agnosticism" with regard to the unification ceremony is already written into the Plan—we do not try to define exactly what God will do yet all are convinced that He will give real blessing. Is it too much to ask that we may be humble enough to confess a like openness to God's blessing, without stating categorically what it is, and what it is not, in the case of the "Baptism" of one who is now a believing Christian, and was in infancy sprinkled with water in the Threefold Name?

Yours sincerely,
A PRESBYTERIAN

Alternative Practices of Baptism

The Negotiating Committee in August 1955 carefully studied certain proposals which had been made to provide for the alternative practices of Baptism which have been accepted in the Plan of Union. These proposals, among other things, sought to provide for possible conscientious difficulties which might arise if a person already baptised in infancy should be led to the conviction that only baptism as a believer is proper baptism. While the Negotiating Committee accepted fully certain of the proposals, which included a decision that action to meet such conscientious conviction should be taken on the direction of the Bishop of the Diocese, it asked a sub-committee to study further the principles which should guide the Bishop in making his decision. In doing this it took no decision on a proposal for a particular kind of service which might be used to meet the conscientious difficulty involved.

The sub-committee concerned studied the matter further and its new proposals which will come before the Negotiating Committee are as follows :

RESOLVED (1) That since the proposal (mentioned above) has not met with sufficiently general acceptance to give confidence that it will be useful, it be not pursued further at least in the meantime ;

(2) To recommend to the Negotiating Committee that it should make it clear that while the practice of the Church has been clearly laid down, it is also recognised that the various practices regarding Baptism which have been followed by negotiating churches and which have been a source of division in the Church clearly indicate that this is a field in which we must look for further light in the conditions of union.

Provision has already been made that serious problems of conscience shall be referred to the Bishop of the diocese for direction. It is therefore not desirable as yet to seek to anticipate by a rigid ruling the kind of action to meet such problems which the ministers of the United Church may be led of God to take as and when these arise in their pastoral ministry ;

(3) That the sub-committee is of opinion that the various aspects of the question which have been recognised in its discussions as well as others should be the subject of further study and discussion from now on through conversations, articles and correspondence. It is believed that such discussion, if stimulated throughout the churches, will help greatly to clarify in the minds of those responsible the kind of considerations which must weigh in facing any particular problems in the future.

In view of the importance of this subject for the Plan of Union we welcome the contributions in this number by the Rev. B. F. Price and by " Presbyterian " and invite further contributions by readers.

The Problem of Church Membership

ONE of the most difficult problems to be solved in the Plan of Union is that of accommodating within one Constitution the different views of Church Membership which are held on the one hand by those Churches which practise Infant Baptism and on the other hand by the Baptist Churches which do not. Both are agreed that it is Baptism which is the Sacrament of entry into the membership of the Church. Consequently the Baptist has never been able to accept children who have not reached a personal confession of faith as ' members ' of the Church, while equally definitely the non-Baptist must claim that just as an infant is a true member of a human family so that child is received sacramentally, in Baptism, into true membership of the Church, which is the Household of God.

Difficult as is the problem, there are certain facts which give hope of a solution. Thus the Baptist is deeply concerned that no statement should be made which would seem to deny to his unbaptised children their status as *Christian* children to be treated as such in every way. At the same time the non-Baptist thinks it equally important to make it clear that no mature person should take his place as a fully responsible member of the Church without conscious and public confession of personal faith. If these respective desires are respected it seems certain that

here will be little *practical* outward difference n the way in which the Church treats its hildren.

This matter has been worked out in the Negotiating Committee in its statement of ow a person will be received into communi-ant membership by the alternative ways of) Infant Baptism followed by confirmation nd (ii) Infant Dedication followed by Believer's Baptism. At the same time it was elt that more work needed to be done on he definitions of 'membership' in the Plan of Union and a sub-committee was appointed to prepare proposals. These proposals were vorked out at a meeting held in January, 956 and they will be for consideration by he Negotiating Committee later in the year. These are some of the proposals.

A. **In the Basis of Union:** It is proposed hat in the statement on "Membership" paragraphs (ii) and (iii) should read as follows:

(ii) Those children of Christian parents within he uniting Churches who have been baptised or who have been brought to a service of dedication hall be recognised as members under instruction.

(iii) The full privileges and obligations of membership in the united Church shall belong to those persons who have been both baptised and, having ttained years of discrection, having gained some neasure of experience in the Christian life and having received due instruction in Christian truth nd in the duties of their Christian calling, have nade public profession of their faith and of their purpose, with God's help, to serve and follow Christ s members of his Church....."

B. **In the Constitution:** It is proposed in he Section on Membership to replace the present section (ii) by the following statement:

The Church of North India and Pakistan affirms hat the persons described below also share in the privileges and obligations of membership according to their capacity and status:

(a) Those children of Christian parents of the Church of North India and Pakistan who have been baptised or who have been brought to service of dedication shall, until such time as they are admitted to communicant status, be recognised as members under instruction;

(b) Persons, together with their children, who having renounced former beliefs and practices and having declared their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ attend worship and are receiving instruction in the Church in preparation for baptsim shall be enrolled as catechumens and shall be recognised as members on probation;

(c Persons who by the proper authorities in the Church have been deprived of certain privileges of membership for conduct adjudged to be inconsistent with their Christian profession shall be recognised as members under discipline.

While it is the accepted practice of the Church of North India and Pakistan that Christian parents are expected to bring their children for baptism or dedication and to promise to instruct them in the Faith until such time as they can make the act of personal faith and trust in the Saviour for themselves, it is recognised that for various reasons the baptism or dedication of some children may be delayed. The Church affirms, nevertheless, that such children also are within the circle of its responsibility and have the right to Christian nurture and instruction, which the Church will seek to have provided for them.

It is also proposed to add the following, unless the subject is adequately covered by a comprehensive section on the autonomy of the Church:

The Church, in virtue of her spiritual calling, affirms her sole right to define and declare through her competent authorities who are and who are not her members and all questions of their status within the Church.

Discussion on these proposals will help the Negotiating Committee which will take them up in October 1956.

Promoting Interest in Church Union

An Initiative in Dehra Dun

In January, 1956 a Conference of ministers and church members at the Christian Retreat and Study Centre, Rajpur, heard addresses on the Church of South India by the Rev. Tom Garrett of Tirumaraiyur. As an outcome of the discussions which followed a "Clergy Fellowship" of ministers was formed which agreed to take the following among other concrete steps to prepare for Church Union in Dehra Dun:

1. To arrange for pastors to conduct services in each other's churches;
2. To preach at fairly frequent intervals on Church Union;
3. To have congregations study and discuss the Plan of Union;
4. To share in united evangelistic efforts.

A week later the Fellowship held its first meeting and resolved to meeting regularly on the last Monday of each month, and it was agreed that for several months at least the subject for consideration should be "Church Union". Plans were worked out for congregational meetings in Hindustani and English to study the Plan and definite steps were taken to promote the distribution of *Church Union—News and Views*.

By the unity of the Church we must understand an unity into which we feel persuaded that we are truly ingrafted. For unless we are united with all the other members under Christ our head, no hope of the future inheritance awaits us. Hence the Church is called Catholic or Universal, for two or three cannot be invented without dividing Christ; and this is impossible. All the elect of God are so joined together in Christ, that as they depend on one head, so they are as it were compacted into one body, being knit together like its different members; made truly one by living together under the same Spirit of God in one faith, hope, and charity, called not only the same inheritance of eternal life, but to participation in one God and Christ. For although the sad devastation which everywhere meets our view may proclaim that no Church remains, let us know that the death of Christ produces fruit, and that God wondrously preserves His Church, while placing it as it were in concealment.

John Calvin—*Institutes* IV. I. 2

Writers in this Number

The Rt. Revd. L. Woolmer, M. A. is Bishop of Lahore of the Church of India, Pakistan, Burma and Ceylon.

Rev. C. C. Pande, B. A., Bankura, is Superintendent of the work of the Methodist Church in Bengal, and is convener of the Delegation of the Methodist Church (British and Australian Conferences)

Rev. J. W. L. Timmins, Norwood, Ceylon, is a priest of the Church of Ceylon.

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Church Union Publications

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North India Tract and Book Society,

18 Clive Road,

Allahabad.

Amendments to the Plan as approved up to August 1955, may be obtained from the Secretary of the Negotiating Committee,

Very Rev. A. Ralla Ram, D. D.

Jamna, Allahabad.

Suggested Services for use at the proposed Inauguration of the Church of North India and Pakistan (price Re. 1/- plus postage) are obtainable from the publishers :

Christian Literature Society,

Post Box 501,

Park Town, Madras.

The **Plan** is also obtainable in several of the major languages of North India and Pakistan. For information apply to the Secretary.

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